DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 267 025 SP 027 200

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TITLE Providing Precollegiate Assistance for High School Athletes in a Big City School District.
PUB DATE Jan 86
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Athletes; *Athletics; *College Preparation; *College School Cooperation; Higher Education; High Schools; *Transitional Programs

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the 1985 Summer Program for High School Athletes was to develop and conduct a pilot program that would acquaint high school athletes with information and skills to better prepare them for the transition fr high school to higher education. The University of Missouri-Kansas ty conducted the 2-week program in conjunction with the Kansas City School District and resource persons in the community to better prepare high school athletes for the adjustments that must be made for a successful transition to university level athletics. A variety of themes and topics in the curriculum were selected to help students prepare for a career in college and thereafter. Curriculum components included: athletic injuries and treatment methodologies; community commitment; diagnostic assessment in reading; ethics; interviewing; leadership; nutrition; parental concerns; recruiting; self awareness/stress; study skills; substance abuse; test taking skills; and future considerations. Appropriate cooperation between a university, a school district, and other community institutions and resources can help high school athletes prepare for a successful transition. (CB)

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ED267025

Providing Precollegiate Assistance for High School Athletes in a Big City School District

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JANUARY, 1986

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Sports has become a big business. Some professional sports franchises are valued at more than 25 million dollars. Some athletic departments of major colleges and universities have budgets of 10 million dollars or more. Coaches are hired with contracts that exceed those of most university chancellors and presidents. The expectations of many alumni often exceed reality. It is clear that universities may earn millions from the performances of student-athletes yet do little for them after their eligibility has been used.

At the high school level interest also has increased. Attendance at high school events has grown during the past ten years. In Texas it is not uncommon to see ten thousands avid fans at the local high school football game. In some states, competition for position on high school football teams is so keen that some coaches and parents have "red shirted" their eighth grade student athletes to give them an advantage over other students for positions on the high school football team the following year.

Needless to say, athletics are a big part of our lives and, unfortunately, there sometimes is a big price to pay for it. Part of the price is in the exploitation of athletes at all levels of the participation continuum and continuing neglect in addressing problems that these athletes face. To be sure, the problems are somewhat different for the high school, college, and professional athlete but they are there nonetheless.

As regards high school athletes, what are the critical problems they face as they look toward the next step in their athletic career? Another way of looking at the problem might be to ask, "What are the skills, talents, attitudes, and information needed by student athletes to better improve their chances of a successful experience in higher education?" Or one might ask, "What are the pitfalls that trap student athletes such that their activities do not result in a successful outcome?"

If we trace the path of high school athletes from the time they are sophomores until they have completed the process of selecting an institution of higher education, we find that there are certain common problems and information that all student athletes will eventually need to face and acquire. To the extent they will solve these problems, they will increase their chances of success and be much more informed as they proceed through their athletic career.

UMKC/KCSD PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES

The Schools of Education and Medicine, of the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) in cooperation with the Kansas City, Missouri School District (KCSD) attempted to address problems described above in a pilot program during the summer of 1985. The program was two weeks in duration and was conducted immediately following the end of school. Two athletes (one male and one female) from each of the nine KCSD high schools were selected by their coaches and principals to participate in the Program. The criteria for selection included: (1) junior class standing, (2) demonstrated athletic ability such that the student would have a realistic chance of participating in athletics at the college level, (3) sincere desire to participate in the program, and (4) additional criteria at the discretion of the individual high school. While the

KCSD was proceeding with the selection process, UMKC was identifying the themes thought to be most important and appropriate to emphasize in working with students. After considerable discussion among knowledgeable individuals, the themes identified were: athletic injuries and treatment methodologies; community commitment; diagnostic assessment in reading; ethics in athletics; interviewing skills; leadership skills; nutrition for athletes; parental concerns; recruiting rules and procedures; self awareness/stress; study skills; substance abuse; techniques in weight training; and future considerations.

After the topics were identified and agreed upon by UMKC and KCSD officials, the next task was to find the most qualified people to serve as faculty for the program. This task provided the opportunity to involve the community-at-large and design the implementation of the program so that there was in fact a KCSD, University, and community partnership.

Faculty for the program were identified from sources such as UMKC's School of Business and Public Administration, School of Education, and School of Medicine. In addition, personnel from the NCAA, the NAIA, the Big 8 Conference, Kansas State University, Baptist Memorial Hospital, the Kansas City Chiefs Football Club, the local media, and others contributed their time without compensation.

The typical day started at 9:00 A.M. and all classes were conducted on the UMKC campus with the exception of the presentation made by the Kansas City Chiefs coaching staff. That presentation was conducted at Arrowhead Stadium.

The teaching format was varied throughout the two weeks. The students learned from lectures, demonstrations, and participation. In addition students were required to keep a notebook which was reviewed by a learning skills specialist

for accuracy and appropriateness. Students were then given suggestions on how they could improve their note-taking ability. Hopefully the skills developed in this exercise carried over to the classroom for their senior year.

DESCRIPTION OF CURRICULUM COMPONENTS

Brief descriptions of each topic which constituted a part of the curriculum in the two-week program for student athletes are provided below.

Athletic injuries and treatment methodologies. Injuries can play a very important part in a high school athlete's career. Prevention of such injuries is equally as important as the treatment. Basic concepts in preventing injuries, such as proper warm up and conditioning, were stressed. Relevant terminology (e.g. tendons, ligaments, cartilage) also was introduced.

Community commitment. Because student athletes are so visible, they have a potential impact and influence on their classmates and community. The fact that you are an athlete often gives you recognition and credibility. Two professional persons who had distinguished themselves as athletes and community leaders were asked to discuss their commitment and activities involving community problems. The students had the opportunity to ask questions and reflect on how they might make a contribution as well.

Diagnostic assessment in reading. The three "R's" are critical skills for success in any field. During the program students were given a diagnostic test to assess their current reading level. Suggestions were given to help improve their score, and strong encouragement was given for them to continue to practice their reading skills and improve on their vocabulary.

Ethics. Recruiting violations, illicit use of drugs, and the university's responsibility to the student athletes were a few of the topics discussed by a sports editor, a coach, and a professor of philosophy.

Interviewing. Three half-days were spent discussing the basic "do's and dont's" while being interviewed. Closed-circuit television was used to give the student a chance to evaluate his or her progress. Members of the media (newspaper, radio, and television) then gave the students a "final exam" interview which was video taped, played back, and critiqued. Outtakes from actual interviews with athletes were presented to give the students examples of successful and unsuccessful interviews.

Leadership. Students were introduced to the basic concepts of leadership. Role-playing exercises were used to illustrate the principles of leadership that could be used in an athletic milieu.

Nutrition. Basic principles of nutrition for the athlete were discussed. The importance of a balanced diet was stressed. Foods and their calorie counts were illustrated.

Parental concerns. Parents of students were invited to participate in an evening session. A parent of a student who is currently participating in athletics at a major university discussed her role in the recruitment process and also her responsibility as a supportive parent during her son's eligibility.

Recruiting. The information presented in this activity was designed to provide a general summary of NCAA and NAIA rules and regulations. The guidelines related primarily to the recruiting and eligibility of prospective high school athletes as well as to the financial aid they are permitted to receive.

Self awareness/stress. Students were encouraged to discuss their concerns about themselves and about their future in athletics. Techniques were suggested to reduce stress and anxiety.

Study skills. Each student was helped to improve his or her ability to organize and analyze information. In addition, students were provided with practical strategies for studying, taking and using notes, organizing time and materials for study, reviewing, and preparing for and taking exams.

Substance abuse. A pharmacist presented materials concerning the deleterious effects of commonly misused substances. The effects of steroids on the physiology and anatomy of the body were discussed.

Test taking skills. This activity was designed to assist the students in preparing for college entrance examinations such as the S.A.T. and the A.C.T. The emphasis was on a review of the necessary math, reading comprehension, and vocabulary skills needed for college and university entrance examinations.

Future considerations. The future as seen by three persons at different stages of their athletic careers was discussed with the students. Perspectives presented included a high school all-American just beginning a college career, a former professional football player who was beginning a new career after five

years in professional football, and an athletics director who discussed numerous successful and unsuccessful careers of athletes.

SUMMARY

The purpose of the 1985 Summer Program For High School Athletes was to develop and conduct a pilot program that would acquaint high school athletes with information and skills to better prepare for the transition from high school to higher education. The University of Missouri-Kansas City conducted this two-week program in conjunction with the Kansas City (Mo.) School District and resource persons in the community, to better prepare high school athletes for the adjustments that must be made for a successful transition to university-level athletics. A variety of themes and topics included in the curriculum were selected to help students prepare for a career in college and thereafter. Appropriate cooperation between a university, a school district, and other community institutions and resources can help high-school athletes prepare for a successful transition.